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DON QUIXOTE SALUTING THE PEASANT DAMSEL
GOBELIN TAPESTRY — ATELIER OF COZETTE, DATED 1773
LENT BY J. PIERPONT MORGAN

GOBELIN TAPESTRIES

MR. J. PIERPONT MORGAN has recently lent to the Museum five Gobelin tapestries of particular interest. They are from the famous series illustrating the History of Don Quixote which in its different versions formed one of the chief undertakings of the Royal Manufactory of the Gobelins throughout the greater part of the eighteenth century. The series was begun about the year 1714 when Charles

Coypel, the painter, then commencing his career, prepared the first of twenty-eight cartoons for tapestry, the subjects being chosen from the story of Don Quixote. Each design contained numerous figures on a small scale, pictorially treated, and was placed in the center of a deep and elaborate border or frame, relatively more important than the picture it surrounded. This border, which was probably arranged by Coypel, but drawn by the flower and decorative painters of the establishment, was used in all the

pieces of the first set, practically without variation save in width. Later on as new sets were undertaken, the border was rearranged and re-designed from time to time, so that it exists in at least six different versions, although in every case Coppel's original cartoons for the pictorial inserts were faithfully copied without alteration.

Mr. Morgan's five pieces all show the border in its fifth and most successful form, where it represents the combined work of Coppel, Belin de Fontenay, and Audran the younger. In it the central picture is surrounded by a heavy gold frame curved at the top and bottom, which rests on a gilded base supported by characteristic volutes. Directly underneath the frame, beneath two flowery cornucopias, is a crescent-shaped cartouche containing the figure of a classic warrior; beneath this, again, is an inscription stating the title of the picture; and on either side of the base is an arrangement of trophies, banners, sheep, books, and an amusingly realistic dog. A peacock with spreading tail is placed at the top above the frame, from the upper corners of which hang heavy garlands of flowers with half-concealed birds and monkeys among them. The entire composition is surrounded by an outer border imitating a gold frame with small cartouches of bright blue in the corners.

The chief distinction of the tapestries, however, lies in the exceptional rose-colored or light crimson background against which the various decorative motives are placed, so that the combination of the paler naturalistic tints of the central picture with the yellow of the frames, imitating gold, the white and strong tones of the garlands, and the fine rose-red of the ground, gives these pieces a brilliancy rarely found in tapestries, and never in any but Gobelins of this period. They are in an exceptional state of preservation, and the colors apparently have not faded in the slightest degree. This rose-red ground, or *damas cramoisi*, was the invention of James Neilson, a Scotchman, who was for many years the head tapestry worker of the manufactory, his atelier,

or workshop, leading among the several into which the establishment was divided. Neilson was responsible for many innovations and improvements, and in 1760 discovered a light crimson far more brilliant than anything which had before been obtainable. The Don Quixote tapestries had always previously been woven with yellow backgrounds, but Neilson at once proceeded to use the Coppel cartoons again, substituting his newly-discovered crimson in the background. This was the seventh time the Gobelin manufactory started a series of Don Quixote tapestries, although none of the previous achievements equaled the success of the new venture. One piece of Mr. Morgan's, that showing Don Quixote led by Folly with the lady Dulcinea at one side and the windmills in the distance against the sky, was the last piece of this set to be woven. It was finished in 1783, but remained in the Gobelin factory throughout the Revolution until 1810, when it was presented as an official gift to the Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt.

When Neilson in his first few pieces had proved the great success of his *damas cramoisi* for a background, two other ateliers of the manufactory, those of Cozette and Audran, working in collaboration, began an eighth series of the Don Quixote tapestries precisely similar to that of Neilson's in all respects, save that his were woven on high warp looms while the new set was done on low warp. The resultant difference in texture, however, can scarcely be detected. Mr. Morgan's four other pieces formed part of this series. They show Don Quixote served by the noble ladies, deceived by Sancho into saluting a peasant damsel as the true Dulcinea, sending Sancho to the Duchess' stirrup to beg permission to look at her, and embracing the grinning Sancho, who departs for his island kingdom of Barataria. The first three were from the atelier of Cozette, the fourth from that of Audran, and all were completed in 1773 after having been nearly three years each in process of making.

Like all the products of the Gobelin manufactory, they were at the king's

disposal, and in 1774 Louis XVI presented the set of four, together with four others of different design, to the aged Cardinal Charles Antoine de La Roche-Aymon, who had been intimately associated with the king in many of the important events of his career. As Archbishop of Rheims and Grand Aumonier of France, the Cardinal had baptized and confirmed Louis, had administered to him his first communion, married him, and finally crowned him the year before. The gifts were hung in the Archiepiscopal palace and remained there until the sale of the Cardinal's effects after his death in 1777. In 1883 they were brought to London and again placed on the market, and by this time the fifth piece from Neilson's atelier, originally the property of the Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt, had been added to them. So far as is known, there are no other pieces of the Don Quixote series in America, nor any Gobelins of a like quality, and it is very improbable that such can again be obtained, since almost all of the tapestries of this series form part of Government collections, those of the State in France and of the crown in Italy and Germany.

D. F.

AN ASSYRIAN SWORD



ANTELOPE
DETAIL FROM THE
ASSYRIAN SWORD

A GIFT received lately from Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, is an Assyrian sword of rare interest. It is, in fact, the only specimen of its kind, the primitive bronze *Sa-pa-ra*, of which the writer has any record, although its type is well known in Assyrian monuments, notably cylinders, on which the god Maruduk is shown fighting with a dragon. The present sword is well known to archæologists and was long exhi-

bited in the Assyrian gallery of the British Museum. It has several times been figured, as in Burton's *Book of the Sword*, p. 208, or in the *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, vol. IV. p. 347. It was obtained about 1875 by an English explorer, Colonel Hanbury, at Nardin, where it had been in the possession of Arabs. Nothing is known of its earlier history.

Among bronze swords it merits high rank in beauty of workmanship; the blade is slender, single-edged, and its outline is gracefully rounded down (forward) from the produced straight tang; its surface is delicately curved from back to edge. In form and in size—it is twenty inches long—the sword suggests the bolo of the Malayan peoples, a case of evolutionary convergence, doubtless, but a curiously complete one, even to the balance of the blade and the form of the handle. On the other hand, its similarity to the Phœnician short sword is less apt to prove a case of parallelism, especially since the Phœnician form is the more highly specialized, a condition which could have been predicted from the time relations of the kindred peoples, Assyrian and Phœnician. It was excellently planned as a chopping sword, and could have been used formidably with a short forearm stroke. Its workmanship is excellent, as in the quality of the surfaces, in the grooving, in the precise and graduated margins of the handle, in the regularly and boldly executed cuneiform characters, above all, in the grace of design of the little incised ornaments (resting antelopes) which appear on the sides of the blade.

The characters have been read and each of the three inscriptions is the same; the first, on the left side of the blade, the second, on the right side of the base of the blade, and the third, on the back of the blade, read: "The Palace of Vul-niari, King of Nations, son of Budil, King of Assyria, son of Belnirai, King of Assyria." The sword is thus important as an historical document, giving as it does the names and relationships of three Assyrian rulers who reigned during the fourteenth century B. C. in the capital of Assur (Kelch Sher-gat), a region from which it was obtained.